
DULUTH-SUPERIOR
METROPOLITAN INTERSTATE COUNCIL

MEETING SUMMARY
Wednesday, July 20, 2005

WITC Conference Center
600 N. First Street, Superior, Wisconsin

Voting Members Present:

Broc Allen
Nick Baker, *Wisconsin Co-Chair*
David Conley
Esther Dalbec
Bill Eckman
Earl Elde, *Secretary*
Bob Finsland
Keith MacDonald
Isobel Rapaich
Jim Stauber
Russ Stover

Voting Members Absent:

Ed Anderson*
David Bilden*
Wayne Jordahl
Richard Kieren*
Kay McKenzie*
Peg Sweeney*
Rob Stenberg, *Minnesota Co-Chair*

* = Excused

Others Present:

Sherry Berhow
Holly Butcher
Ron Chicka
James Gittemeier
Andy McDonald
Rondi Watson

Representing:

Douglas County Suburban Townships
Douglas County
Douglas County
City of Superior
Douglas County
St. Louis County Suburban Townships
City of Superior
City of Hermantown
Duluth Transit Authority
City of Duluth
City of Duluth

Representing:

Douglas County
City of Superior Citizen Rep
St. Louis County Suburban Townships
City of Proctor
Douglas County
St. Louis County
City of Duluth

Representing:

ARDC / MIC Intern
ARDC / MIC Staff
ARDC / MIC Director
ARDC / MIC Staff
ARDC / MIC Staff
ARDC / MIC Staff

1. Introductions/Agenda Review

Wisconsin Co-chair Nick Baker called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and all meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. Committee Business

Meeting summary of June 15, 2005

Chair Baker called for amendments or corrections to the previous month's meeting summary. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Bob Finsland/Earl Elde moved to approve the meeting summary from the June 15, 2005 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Final 2006-2008 Duluth Area Transportation Improvement Program

James Gittemeier presented the final 2006-2008 Duluth Area Transportation Improvement Program and reviewed the text changes that had been made to the document since the draft version was presented in June. He noted that no comments had been received during the 30-day public comment period or at the public meeting held on June 15 at the Hampton Inn in Canal Park. He added that the MPCA officially approved the content of the draft document for air quality conformity purposes on July 1. He closed by requesting approval of the final document.

Earl Elde/Bill Eckman moved to approve the final 2006-2008 Minnesota TIP. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Safe Routes to School in Duluth—Scope of Work

Holly Butcher reviewed the tasks and timelines set forth in the Scope of Work for Duluth Safe Routes to School project. She noted that the specific schools had not yet been identified, but that Ken Willms, the Duluth Public Schools Transportation Director, had suggested five 'walkable' urban elementary schools and one middle school as good fits for this study. After the Scope of Work is approved, she will be contacting them to gauge their level of interest. She added that she was scheduled to make a presentation about Safe Routes to School concepts to the Duluth School Board at their August Board meeting. She closed by requesting approval of the Scope.

Bill Eckman/Isobel Rapaich moved to approve the Scope of Work as presented for the SR2S-Duluth study. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

5. Duluth Heights Traffic Study—Scope of Work

Andy McDonald reviewed the Scope of Work for the Duluth Heights Traffic Circulation Study, noting that it had been modified from the draft version to incorporate the feedback and information generated at last month's TAC and MIC meetings. He closed by requesting approval of the Scope of Work.

Broc Allen/Isobel Rapaich moved to approve the Scope of Work as presented for the Duluth Heights Traffic Circulation study. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Rice Lake Road Corridor Study—Scope Development

Holly Butcher presented a preliminary scope of work for the upcoming Rice Lake Road Corridor Study and reported that at the TAC meeting the previous day, Jim Foldesi had stated that the improvements as set forth in “Option 5” pertaining to Lowell Elementary School were already being addressed by St. Louis County this summer. Holly noted that the County also said they had quite a bit of data to supply on this corridor, and what they would be most interested in seeing from this study was information about future capacity needs. Dennis Jensen had noted that cut-through traffic in the area of the Chris Jensen nursing home merited some attention in the Scope, and Denny Johnson had suggested that an additional intersection be included in the study area for traffic counts. Chuck Froseth had commented that the aerial photos from 2002 did not show the residential growth that has since occurred in that area and that information would need to be updated for accurate traffic projections to be made. Holly stated that this input would be incorporated into the final Scope of Work, which would be presented for approval in August.

7. Duluth Port Land Use Plan—Draft

Andy McDonald presented the draft version of the Duluth Port Land Use Plan and requested that MIC members read it and return comments to him. He began by showing the study area relative to the entire Duluth shoreline and noted that it was a comparatively small area with a concentration of maritime and industrial land uses. He singled out the Future Land Use map as the key piece of the plan based on modeling efforts that incorporated a number of features. He noted that he had also met with the study advisory committee and that they had requested several changes before the final plan could be produced. Andy added that Chuck Froseth in City Planning was assisting in setting up a presentation to the Duluth Planning Commission. He added that he viewed this as a very positive opportunity as it is hoped that this Plan and its recommendations will be incorporated into Duluth’s Comprehensive Plan, which is currently being developed.

8. Hermantown Section 13 Traffic Circulation Study

James Gittemeier reported that he had gathered future development and trip generation data and updated the trip distribution tables based on a fully built out Section 13 scenario. This month, URS had made these adjustments to the small area model (Synchro) and determined that a total of 1,750 additional trips could be generated during the evening peak traffic hour, assuming all committed and potential land uses for the area. He stated that he would be reviewing the final model results with the affected jurisdictions before

presenting the draft plan to the TAC and MIC at the August meeting.

9. Long Range Transportation Plan 2030—Public Comments

Holly Butcher presented information about the agency and public input that had been received since the release of the draft last month. She reported that during June, two public meetings were held on the draft Plan. At the June 21st meeting at First United Methodist in Duluth, one citizen attended and expressed concerns about congestion on London Road and adverse impacts experienced by the neighborhood. At the June 23rd meeting at the Superior Public Library, there were no attendees.

She noted that substantial state and federal agency comments had been received, however, during the June 15th Mid-year Review session. She reviewed the comments from FHWA, MnDOT Central Office, MnDOT District 1, and MPCA and reported that due to the volume of suggested changes and the tight timeframe between the close of the public comments on July 30th and the next meeting date of August 17, that MIC staff had decided to produce and present the final Plan for approval at the September meetings.

Some discussion followed on the recent editorial in the Duluth News Tribune criticizing the Transit section of the draft plan for not including commuter rail service in the City of Duluth or rail service between Duluth and the Twin Cities metropolitan area. She pointed out that a recent study, the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRRRI), had identified a Duluth to Minneapolis link, although not as a direct rail connection but as a bus feeder route. She added that she would be adding a discussion of these topics based on the findings and recommendations of the MRRRI study as well as local demographic trends.

She added that Dennis Jensen had discussed the recent DTA trial run of the North Shore Scenic Railway at the TAC meeting the previous day. He stated that the effort was originally conceived not as a full-fledged commuter option but rather as a public relations approach to the statewide BBOP commuter week promotion. He also commented that the participation of 600 or so riders, of whom only a small percentage were actual commuters, demonstrated that the North Shore Scenic Railway was in fact not a viable commuter option. He had also commented on the expansion of rail service between Duluth and the Twin Cities, describing it as an attractive but very expensive concept, which would need further study to support the idea and identify potential funding sources. Ron Chicka added that he would be requesting additional information about the proposed St. Louis County-sponsored study looking into the viability of light rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth, specifically to determine what this proposed study could point out that the other recent ones did not.

10. 2006-2007 MIC Work Program and Budget

Ron Chicka outlined the process and timeline for developing the upcoming 2-year MIC

Work Program and Budget. He began by identifying the ongoing and mandatory elements and then reviewed a list of the optional or discretionary plans and studies. He noted that the following week a survey would be mailed out to all MIC and TAC members to prioritize the optional projects. The top-ranked five to seven projects would likely be included as elements in the 2006-07 Work Program and Budget. He asked committee members to review the list of discretionary projects in case they wanted to add other topics for consideration in the survey, and further asked that they watch for the survey in the mail and to complete and return it as soon as possible. He added that the survey results would be presented for discussion at the August joint meeting of the MIC and TAC, and that a draft document would be presented for approval in September, which would incorporate the top-ranked discretionary projects.

11. Project Updates

Duluth Planning Charrette – James Gittemeier reported on the recently concluded charrette planning process, which focused intensively on the downtown Duluth and East Hillside neighborhoods. Members of the charrette's team, a group of experts from around the country and architecture students and staff from the University of Miami, conducted 16 public meetings over 5 days and made many recommendations. He noted that several of the recommendations are familiar to the MIC from the recent East Hillside, Lake Avenue and Hospital District plans, such as converting some of the neighborhood one-way streets back to two-way streets, striping bike lanes and creating a pedestrian-friendly connection from downtown to Canal Park.

Proctor Master Trail Plan – James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff recently held an organizational meeting at the Proctor Community Center. A steering committee was set up and its monthly meeting dates were scheduled for 4pm at the Proctor Community Center on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. The newly formed steering committee began the trail planning process by reviewing destination and departure points in and around Proctor. The August meeting will involve a further delineation of destination and departure points, as well as looking at existing trail networks.

Duluth Priority Pedestrian Pathways – Holly Butcher reported that the Duluth Priority Pedestrian Pathway committee met again on June 16th to review the GIS model developed by MIC staff that used a series of criteria to identify priority sidewalks and “pathways” connected along DTA routes. The group identified weighting factors for pedestrian criteria and MIC staff adjusted the GIS model accordingly. MIC staff will hold one more meeting on the subject to display the final GIS model results and to discuss future steps necessary to achieve implementation of the concept through public input and city staff.

12. Announcements

Ron Chicka reminded committee members to RSVP if they had not done so already for the August 4th MIC golf tournament.

He added that next month's meeting would be the annual joint meeting of the MIC and TAC on Wednesday, August 17 and encouraged MIC Policy Board members to attend and meet some of the members of the Transportation Advisory Committee. He added that the guest speaker would be Michael Huber from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota, speaking on recent research which shows a link between community and transportation design and the health and health costs of those communities.

13. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rondi Watson
MIC Division Secretary